

1965 WAR

Ack Ack

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Anti-Aircraft in 1965 War

The 3 Anti-Aircraft Brigade comprising of (5 LAA, 6 LAA, 13 LAA, 20 LAA, regiments, and 82 LAA Independent Battery) was the only Ack Ack formation of Pakistan Army and it was responsible for the defence of PAF airbases and radars. For field army, 29 LAA and 36 LAA regiments were integral part of the lone army corps; whereas 19 (SP) LAA was the sole anti-aircraft defence available to the only armoured division held by Pakistan Army. All of the above mentioned anti-aircraft regiments were stationed in West Pakistan. All anti-aircraft regiments' undercommand 3 AA Brigade were equipped with 40 mm Bofors single barrel and 20 mm quadruple cannons. The lone SP (LAA) had 40mm Bofors mounted on M19AI tracks and .50 Quad on M16AI trucks. Each LAA Battery apart from guns also had a Radar type 4, with a range of forty Kilometres.

In 1960, the HAA guns(3.7 inch) along with their Radars were deposited in the ordnance depots and as such there was no medium or high altitude air defence available for the air bases or the field formation.

Tactically, it was hypothesised that in any future conflict with India the threat from IAF will be low level and as such the utility of 3.7 inch guns have outlived their utility; later events proved this hypothesis as partially correct. There were two mobile corps LAA Regiments (29 LAA and 36 LAA) they had .50 Quad cannons, each regiment having 32 in number along with eight pairs of 40m Bofors making a total of 48 guns and cannons . All other LAA Regiments (5 LAA,6 LAA,13 LAA,20 LAA) had 32 guns of 40mm Bofors and sixteen cannons.

Rann of Kutch – 1965

Relationship between Pakistan and India started deteriorating over the dispute of administrative boundaries of Sindh and Bombay marked during British Raj era. Rann of Kutch is a desolate, salty, void of water and life, a desert terrain which lies 200 nautical miles north east of Karachi. In May 1965, the dispute reached to a point where both countries initiated deployment of troops. 3 AA Brigade issued its operational instructions on 5 May 1965 and within a day 5 LAA was deployed at Korangi and Badin whereas 6 LAA was deployed at Mauripur Air Base. In North, 29 LAA also moved and occupied its operational positions which were astride the bridges on River Jhelum and Chenab. 36 LAA was moved initially to protect the bridges at Chiniot, 1 Armoured Division also left its peace location and 19

(SP) LAA also moved out with its parent formation. 13 LAA was deployed at Peshawar and Risalpur airfields.

During Rann of Kutch conflict in 1965, 36 LAA moved to Rahim Ki Bazar on 23 April 1965 to provide AA cover to the artillery supporting the troops in the sector. On 9 May 1965, PAF asked for dispatch of one AA battery to East Pakistan. Accordingly 24 LAA Battery ex 5 Light AA Regiment, already deployed at Korangi, and commanded by Captain Muhammad Afzal Khan (who later became Major General and General Officer Commanding AA Command in late 70s) was sent to Dhaka by sea by private cargo ship Abasin on 12 May 1965. The battery reached there as scheduled and reported in action at 1400 hours on 23 May at Dhaka Air Base. The battery was given the task of providing AA protection to PAF Base Dhaka more specifically the airfield. The battery spent over 6 months under canvas.

There was no air war during the Rann of Kutch conflict; it was decided by both air chiefs of PAF and IAF, not to employ the fighter jets in order to contain the conflict.¹ By mid-June a cease fire was agreed upon and AA Regiments soon moved back to their peace location less 19 (SP) LAA which remained deployed with the

¹ Jjhon Fricker *Battle for Pakistan* (Surrey, Allen, 1979), pp.42-50.

armoured division. It was the first operational test of 3 AAA Brigade and many lessons were learnt from this deployment; in short it was a blessing in disguise. Troops after arrival in peace locations were soon sent on a well-deserved leave as per the standard operating procedures.

Operation Gibraltar and Grand Slam

Operation Gibraltar was the codename for Pakistan's support for the Kashmiri mujahedeen fighting for their right of self-determination against the occupied Indian military in Jammu and Kashmir. It was perceived at the planning level that Indians will react to this, thus all contingencies were considered. 29 LAA was at Mansar Camp where it had relieved the 36 LAA in June 1964; former had been stationed at Multan undercommand 1 Corps Artillery but now placed as part of 4 Corps Artillery. On 4 May 1965, 29 LAA was put on a twelve hours' notice, regiment's tasks were to provide anti-aircraft protection to the bridges on River Ravi, Chenab and Jhelum and also to the Pakistan Army tactical headquarters setup at Kharian. 29 LAA was organised into four batteries and equipped with 40mm Bofors anti-aircraft guns and also with .50 quad. Lieutenant Colonel A.R.Hayat's plan was to have No.109 LAA Battery on River Jhelum, 110 Battery on Chenab River, 111 battery for the defence of Kharian and 112 LAA Battery on

River Ravi, he placed his headquarters at River Chenab. On 4th May, much before dawn, regiment received orders to move immediately and occupy its defensive positions which it did by mid day. Regiment soon had to readjust its positions as the situation change, 112 Battery had to move from Ravi Bridges to Rahwali in support of headquarters 6 Armoured Division; after few days it was placed undercommand 4 Corps artillery. 29 LAA headquarters also move in area Bhai Pheru in support of 7 infantry Division. Situation died down and complete regiment move back to its peace location on 11 July 1965.

111 LAA Battery (29 LAA) and Operation Gibraltar

On 18 July 1965, once again the 29 LAA was ordered to move but this time only one battery was required, thus 111 Battery arrived at Kharian at 1500 hours on 21 July 1965, with the task of providing anti-aircraft protection to 11 Cavalry during the operations.' Uptill 12 August, 111 Battery carried out liaison with 11 Cavalry and carried out reconnaissance of various concentration areas including Daulatnagar and Pero Shah.² However on 13 August 1965, the battery was given a fresh task to provide anti-aircraft protection to

² 29 LAA Digest of Service.

28 Medium Regiment which also had a battery of 10 Medium; 39 Field and 2 Field were the other artillery units which also came under the protection zone of this battery. Eight Bofors (40 mm) were earmarked for the protection of 28 Medium and .50 Quads were distributed, four each for the 39 and 2 Field Regiments.

82 LAA ‘Chinari’ Battery

In June 1949, 20mm LAA Battery was re-designated and amalgamated into Azad Kashmir Regular Force as 82 Light Anti-Aircraft Azad Kashmir Battery,³ while remaining on the ORBAT of Headquarters 12 Division at Chinar Camp Muzaffarabad, Azad Kashmir. On 10 August 1965, Major Muhammad Ikram Hashmi, Battery Commander 82 LAA Battery was designated to enroll 700 Razakars in view of impending hostilities. Major Hashmi played an important role in the Operation Gibraltar, he motivated the locals in joining the freedom movement. Battery itself was deployed at the vital bridges at Azad Pattan, Kohala and Muzaffarabad. Chinari Battery was equipped with Bofors and 20mm guns.

On the morning of 13 August, 111 LAA Battery

³ Digest of Service 148 Light Air Defence Regiment.

moved along with the affiliated regiments to Gujrat, then drove on Gujrat-Bhimber road and reached Paddhar. Soon after arrival and getting into position, own artillery started shelling Indian known positions at Dewa, Burejat, Lalial, Red Hill and Chamb. There was no Indian air attack on own positions and battle confined to artillery shelling. Own artillery kept on changing battle positions and resultantly the 111 LAA Battery also shifted its troops and guns.

Back at Mansar, the peace location, another battery 110 LAA Battery was also placed on 12 hours' notice and very next day this battery also arrived at battle field. Although there was no Indian air attack however enemy artillery carried out artillery air bursts on own positions. On 27 August, both AA batteries of 29 LAA regiment were in position at Kotla.

Operation Grand Slam 1-5 September 1965.

Anti-Aircraft regiments undercommand 3 AA Brigade received their warning orders for deployment at twelve hours' notice on 19 and 20 August 1965. Brigade itself along with its regiments was deployed at Karachi, 13 LAA was at Peshawar. The LAA regiments in support of field and armoured formation were not

undercommand the 3 AA Brigade and as such these regiments moved into operational areas on the orders of corps and divisional staff officers.

By last light of 31 August, 29 LAA was in Kharian and established its headquarters at Padhar; its 112 LAA Battery was tasked to provide anti-aircraft protection to GHQ thus it stayed at transit camp Rawalpindi.

On 1 September Operation Grand Slam was launched by Pakistan Army, aim was to press an advance towards the Akhnur in occupied Kashmir thus threatening lines of communication of Indian Army. The very first dog fight between PAF and IAF took place at 1730 hours, in which IAF lost four aircraft. This aerial fight had a demoralising effect on IAF and for next four days it remained out of the contest. The very first day of Operation Grand Slam started with own artillery guns shelling on Indian positions at Dewa, Munnawar and Chamb. *‘There was an enemy air attack of four Vampires in the morning and four Hunters in the evening, LAA opened up’.*⁴ Naik Piran Ditta of 110 LAA Battery was injured due to enemy air attack, one gun of 28 Medium was also damaged.

Although the ground operation took place in north,

⁴ War Diary 29 LAA.

yet 3 AA Brigade put all its undercommand regiments on high alert and by first light 1 September 1965, Mauripur and Sargodha airbases were well under LAA protective umbrella so were the radar stations at Sakesar in north and Badin in south. Regiments carried out their battle drills and established command posts. LAA guns were deployed on a flat surface with an all-round observation in order to achieve a greater field of fire. Guns were deployed in pair, each pair having a 40 mm Bofors and a 20mm cannon.

As own troops advance so did the LAA Batteries, 110 LAA Battery was advancing with 28 Medium regiment. The tactics and deployment drills were to occupy grounds around own artillery regiment, and deployed the LAA guns in cluster. Communication was a weak link thus fire was on orders of officers. Troops were well trained in identifying a hostile aircraft. Own Army Aviation L-19 aircraft were flying quite extensively for air observation therefore firing discipline was a necessity ; it goes to the credit of LAA gunners that no such incident of friendly fire occurred during the operations.

6 September 1965

The deployment of the anti-aircraft regiments on the morning of the 6 September 1965 when Indian forces

suffering major setback in Grand Slam crossed over international border east of Lahore without any warning; were as under

5 LAA. Undercommand Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad Ashraf, he was in command since May 1961. Regiment had one battery (12 LAA Battery) at Korangi and other (18 LAA Battery) was deployed at Badin. It was having only two batteries as its third battery 24 LAA Battery was transitioned into an independent LAA battery and sailed to Dacca in May 1965. A third battery No.153 LAA was raised on 10 September 1965 and it was deployed at Risalpur. 5 LAA was stationed at Malir and remained deployed during Rann of Kutch, it had partially returned to peace location at Malir. On 30 August 1965 it again occupied its operational locations.

6 LAA. Regiment was being commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Akhtar Ahmed Khan having 21,34 and 50 LAA Batteries. Regiment remained deployed during Rann of Kutch from 15 April 1965 onwards it remained deployed till 3 July 1965 at Mauripur air field. Regiment had a month of rest at Malir in which troops were sent on much due leave when again it was put on 24 hours notice on 19 August 1965. Finally on 30 August 1965 at 1000 hours it received orders to be in action at Mauripur by last light 31 August. 'Regiment being semi

mobile, move was planned in two shifts. First line ammunition was issued to guns...by last light 31 August 1965, regiment was in action'.⁵

13 LAA was being commanded by Lieutenant Colonel A.B.Nasir, having three LAA Batteries. No 14 LAA was put undercommand 20 LAA Regiment at Sargodha, No 20 LAA Battery was deployed at Peshawar and 33 LAA Battery was providing defence to PAF Radar station at Sakesar.

19 (SP) LAA was the only self-propelled anti-aircraft regiment of Pakistan Army; entrusted for the protection of armoured division. Regiment had converted into SP on 24 December 1959, equipped with 40 mm Twin Bofors mounted on M-19A1 carriage and 50 Quad mounted on M16A1 carriage. From its conversion in 1959 till June 1964 it was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Nazir Ahmed and Lieutenant Colonel Sarwar Khan took command in June 1964 and remained in command till September 1967. Regiment was already deployed with armoured division since May 1965. It had four batteries, 48, 49, 50 and 51 supported by an AA Signals section and a detachment of EME (type B). *It was good to have left the peace location four months before the war, 'open air living and occasional*

⁵ War Diary 6 LAA

*changes in location produced a healthy atmosphere and morale. Sports facilities in the form of swimming, volleyball were available in the camp, fruits and other edibles could be obtained at cheaper rates, civil authorities and local population made it even more happy by their cheerful cooperation’.*⁶

Two LAA (SP) Batteries deployed at Kot Radha Krishan and Changa Manga were concentrated and carried out a well-organized individual training, other two batteries deployed at Pattoki conducted training on troop level during summer. ‘A continuous wireless silence was imposed soon after the unit left its peace location which lasted for four months’.⁷ In terms of equipment it had deficiency of three M19A1 and equal number in M16A1, the tracks of later were in bad state and could not be replaced but they lasted throughout the war.

20 LAA

Regiment was originally raised as heavy anti-aircraft at Malir and was transitioned into a LAA Regiment on 1 March 1960 equipped with 40 mm

⁶ War Diary 19 SP LAA

⁷ War Diary 19 SP LAA.

Bofors. On the eve of war it was stationed at Kohat Cantonment. Lieutenant Colonel Noor Muhammad Gondal was in command; unit had three LAA Batteries numbered as 51, 52 and 53. Regiment received its operational orders at 1630 hours on 29 August 1965 to provide AA Defence at Sargodha air field. Two special trains left Kohat railway station on the night of 29/30 August with the regiment and a ground party left Kohat at 0530 hours on 30 August and the whole regiment reassembled at Sargodha on the evening of 30 August 1965.

24 Independent LAA Battery. This battery was an integral unit of 5 LAA and remained deployed at Korangi Creek from 18 April 1965 providing anti-aircraft defences to the SOC at Korangi Creek during Rann of Kutch . On 10 May 1965 , Battery received orders to move to Dacca and on 12 May it sailed along with its equipment and guns to Dacca. Major Faiz Brandon who was recently posted from Air Observation Post (AOP) was designated as the battery commander, he however availed one month long awaited leave and during his leave the war started and the air links between the two wings was disrupted thus Captain Afzal (later GOC AA) officiated the battery. Battery had eighteen 40mm Bofors, one radar and overall strength of 211 all ranks. 24 LAA Battery was placed under command 14 Division at Dacca and was deployed at Tejgaon air

field (Dacca). Apart from Captain (PA 4589) Afzal Khan, Captain (PA 6569) Aijaz Ahmed Khan and Lieutenant (PA 6890) Manzoor Ul Haq were the other officers of the 24 Independent LAA Battery during the war.⁸

29 LAA Regiment undercommand Lieutenant Colonel A.R.Hayat who was in command since November 1960, with No 109, 110,111 and 112 LAA Batteries. Regiment was supporting the 4 Corps operations in Sialkot Sector. Battery commanders were Major Muhammad Iqbal, Major M.H.K.Durrani and Major Tajjamal Hussain. Major Sakhi Muhammad was the second in command and Captain Mushtaq Ahmed was the adjutant of the regiment during the war. Being a Corps LAA, it was equipped with thirty-two. 50 Quad Gun and seven 40mm Bofors Mark 1 Guns along with one AN/TPS-ID Radar.

36 LAA Regiment was under command Lieutenant Colonel M.S.K.Durrani who was in command since December 1959. Regiment had 132,133,134 and 135 LAA Batteries. It was initially deployed to protect the bridges. No 132 LAA Battery was deployed at Ravi Bridge, 132 LAA Battery was initially deployed at Kala and later moved to Sargodha Air Base. 134 LAA

⁸ War Diary 24 Independent LAA Battery

Battery was at Chenab Bridge, it later move to Ravi Syphon; 135 LAA Battery was at Jhelum Bridge, it also move to Khem Kharn during the war. 36 LAA was also a Corps LAA regiment and had 32 (50 Quad) and 8 (40mm Bofors) guns along with one radar.

Corps LAA Regiments were mobile and had sufficient transport for rapid movement, less these two regiments (29 and 36) all other AA Regiments were semi-mobile, and they had transport enough to move only one battery at a time.

LAA Defence of Air Bases

The air war in September War had two distinct phases which operated simultaneously. Air Bases were a natural target and they remained so during the seventeen days of conflict, simultaneously in the field, ground formations were subjected to air attacks by IAF. This was the first major war after the WWII in which anti-aircraft played an active and decisive role and as such is a matter of great interest to historians. PAF was technically and technologically far superior to the IAF, it had F-104 Starfighter the only supersonic fighter in the subcontinent. PAF apart from a squadron of Starfighters had over ninety Sabres F-86 and a squadron of B-57 Bombers along with C-130 transporters. India on the other hand had British and French aircraft including

Mystere, Vampire, Gnat, Hunter fighters and Canberra bombers. There were few MIG-21s as well.

PAF had its headquarters at Peshawar in north, Risalpur was another major airfield in close vicinity of air headquarters, mainly operated by PAF Academy. Sargodha in the Central Punjab was and still is the heart of PAF; it was the most important airfield as bulk of PAF strike fighters were stationed here. At Sakesar, 100 nautical miles west of Sargodha amidst the medium hills of Soan –Sakesar was the surveillance radar of PAF. In south the Mauripur is the major airfield located few miles south west of Karachi. PAF had two major surveillance radars in the south, most important being at Badin, a semi desert area located 150 nautical miles east of Karachi. PAF had the overall responsibility of defending the air space of Pakistan, the air strategy revolved around attaining air supremacy in the initial stage and support to field formations depends upon the outcome of air battle. PAF also had 20mm cannons manned by their own troops which were integrated with the LAA Batteries at the air bases. Early warning and identification of friend and foe are two basic bricks of anti-aircraft defence from its inception and this war was no exception. PAF and Pakistan Army (3 AA Brigade) had established a joint operation centre at Karachi and at 1 Corps an air liaison officer from PAF was present. In the field a ground liaison officer was responsible for

indicating targets to own air force. Request for an air sortie in support of own troops had to be routed through the brigade and divisional headquarters. Thus anti-aircraft regiments and batteries have to be kept informed regarding any air movement to avoid friendly fire on own aircraft. Both LAA Regiments supporting field formation had their own integral local warning radars with a range of 20 nautical miles. However the air warning sentry (mobile observer) still remained the most reliable source during day light hours. Everything in the ends comes down to the gun crew, it is they who in split of seconds have to detect and open fire on the air intruder and keep on firing; never letting him go undetected. The long deployment in the field and at air bases since the beginning of the year paid its dividends as troops although mostly uneducated yet they now fully differentiate between own and enemy aircraft.

Pakistan Army's anti-aircraft defence was fully prepared, well trained and highly motivated on the eve of the war and so was the Pakistan Air Force.

6 September 1965. At 0530 hours, India crossed the international border and at 1200 hours, President of Pakistan Field Marshal Ayub Khan addressed the nation and war was declared.⁹ Surprisingly there were no air

⁹ War Diary 6 LAA.

raids on any of the PAF base on the very first day of the war, rather PAF struck first in the evening (1730 hours) attacking Adampur, Pathankot and Halwara air bases. F-86 Sabres practically destroyed entire fleet of newly inducted Russian MIG-21s of IAF on ground.¹⁰ IAF came into action after a lapse of twenty four hours. *The entire day we manned the guns and there was a thrill in the air, everyone looking at the sky and listening for faint noise of any aircraft. It was our first war and we had no idea how it will start. As an Ack Ack gunner, war is different for us from other gunners; we fire directly as a man-to-man on an enemy aircraft.*¹¹

On ground, the main focus was on Lahore Sector where advancing Indian were mauled by the attacking Sabres of PAF. One major move was the shifting of 133 LAA Battery ex 36 LAA Regiment which was deployed at Central Ordnance Depot at Kala was ordered at 0400 hours 7th September to move immediately to Sargodha. The convoy left Kala at 0600 hours, time was consumed in getting the vehicles for the move and drove through Mandi Bahauddin and reached Sargodha at 1300 hours and within an hour occupied their gun platforms just in

¹⁰ PAF Museum at Karachi . 1965 Air War through paintings.

¹¹ 13 LAA Digest of Service.

time to be ready to receive the air raid.¹² This battery was also placed undercommand 20 LAA Regiment, thus on the evening of 7 September 1965 there were 72 anti-aircraft guns (40 mm Bofors) 15 (20 mm triple barrel cannon) and 8 (.50 quards) protecting the air field.¹³

7 September 1965. First air raid of the war came over at Rawalpindi at 0130 hours, target was apparently General Headquarters (GHQ) and Chaklala air field. 'Two enemy Canberra came over Rawalpindi at 0130 and dropped eight bombs of thousand pounds each',¹⁴ Two 40 mm guns of 112 LAA Battery (29 LAA Regiment) which was specifically deployed for the anti-aircraft defence of GHQ opened fire. However, as the bombers were at medium altitude thus out of range of 40mm Bofors. It was at this stage, it became obvious that discarding heavy ack ack guns (3.7 inch) was not a good step. This was the first and only air raid over Rawalpindi.

At **0430 hours**, Badin radar picked up signatures of

¹² War Diary 36 LAA Regiment. and War Diary 20 LAA Regiment

¹³ War Diary 20 LAA Regiment

¹⁴ War Diary 29 LAA Regiment

incoming Indian aircraft and it passed the plot of six aircraft at a distance of eighty nautical miles, at ten thousand feet, south-east of Mauripur. At 0450 hours, local radar of 6 LAA picked up the intruders, At 0455 hours IAF aircraft reached Mauripur, two of them entered the area and projected light at Air Traffic Building, instantly guns opened fire and initially fired Barrage, later guns continued firing by observation in the moon lit light till 0459 hours. Aircraft had pulled away hastily and no damage was caused to the air field.¹⁵

At **Sargodha** Base, first raid also came at about 0515 hours, six Mysteres initially recognized as friendly (since they had their landing gears lowered) raided the base. However, when these aircraft approached closer to the air field they were recognized and guns started firing. The gunners of this battery (14 LAA) in coordination with 20 LAA Regiment shot down one aircraft.¹⁶ Pakistan Air Force interceptors shot down remaining four aircraft before they could escape. *This was a memorable day in the history of this regiment (20 LAA) as expected first raid came...in this very first encounter with enemy raiders the Regiment shot down one Mystere*

¹⁵ War Diary 6 LAA Regiment.

¹⁶ War Diary 13 LAA Regiment. 1965 War.

*and damage was caused to the other aircraft.*¹⁷ As the air attack subsided the troops although still manning the guns in high state, had a little breather, for all of them this was the first ever taste of an air raid. The layout of deployment was such that two batteries were deployed at each end of runways and two other batteries were deployed at the mid of runway. Ammunition was placed close to the guns and as such the guns were being replenished when second wave of raiders appeared at 0610 hours, comprising of six aircraft. These aircraft made low pass and without causing or suffering any loss or damage they disappeared. At 0910 hours, the third wave of attackers came, 20 LAA Regiment and 14 LAA Battery responded with fire and one aircraft was claimed as hit, however own F-86 Sabre at tarmac was hit by an enemy strafing and it was destroyed on ground.

In the evening at 1545 hours, the fourth raid of IAF appeared, it caught the guns by surprise *‘this raid came in un-announced both by SOC and own radar, LAA observer of this regiment however gave early warning and the guns effectively engaged the targets which dropped their load of 500 Lbs ineffectively. One of the enemy aircraft was hit by LAA fire and it crashed 4-5 miles south-east of the air field near Chak 96 GB’.*¹⁸

¹⁷ War Diary 20 LAA Regiment

¹⁸ War Diary 20 LAA

Fifth and last air raid at Sargodha Air Base came at 2100 hours, and passed off harmlessly.¹⁹

Mauripur Air Base was also raided at about 2300 hours, two IAF aircraft attacked the air field; one was shot by gunners of 6 LAA Regiment.²⁰ No serious damage was caused to the Mauripur Base throughout the war. A total of nine Indian aircraft were shot down by own air force including two claimed by LAA fire on 7 September 1965 at Sargodha²¹, it is now celebrated as PAF Day. No bridge on Rivers Jhelum , Chenab and Ravi were attacked, neither Radar stations of PAF at Badin and Sakesar were intruded; it seems as if IAF had chickened out.²²

Dacca

The first and the last air attack on Dacca came in the morning of 7 September 1965, IAF strafed PAF radar

¹⁹ War Diary 20 LAA

²⁰ War Diary 6 LAA

²¹ 13 LAA letter no SC/A/4/29 dated 15th April 1966.

²² War Diary 20 LAA Regiment

station at Kurmitola, couple of miles away from Tejgaon air field. The radar station itself was without any Ack Ack protection. After the air raid, PAF asked for AA guns, 'the radar station required eighteen guns of 40 mm, or a battery to protect it'. Captain Afzal Khan demanded extra guns from Dacca Ordnance depot; they had only one 40 mm Bofors which they issued to the battery. Captain Afzal pulled one more gun from his defences and thus placed two guns at the Kurmitola. 'By evening two guns were provided for the defence of PAF radar'.²³

On **8 September**, Mauripur and Sargodha were put on high alert with guns being free and waiting for the visual detection of IAF. At 0154 hours, enemy aircraft intruded in our air space (Mauripur), but it returned without attacking . On the same day Mauripur was attacked at 2100 hours. Two enemy aircraft approaching Mauripur were picked up by own LAA radar, at 2105 hours aircraft entered the area and guns fired Umbrella Barrage, no damage was done to the air base.²⁴ Mauripur Air Base from 9 September till the ceasefire on 23 September 1965 had few alerts but no air raid came on the air field. Sargodha also had alarms of intruding Indian aircraft on 8

²³ War Diary 24 LAA Battery

²⁴ War Diary 6 LAA Regiment.

September but they never reached the air base.

Night Bombing Campaign

Indian Air Force after the colossal losses it suffered on 7 September did not resort to day attacks rather it opted to attack the air bases in the hours of darkness. IAF had penetrated the own airspace on 8 and 9 September at Sargodha but failed to drop any payload. First night attack came on 9/10 September 1965. At 0100 hours, the first wave of bombers came , ‘ *it caused no damage, three of his bombs fell in the wagon line of 20 LAA and 14 AA Workshop area...three of his bombs fell very close to the dispersal area of F-104.*’²⁵ The attack on 10/11 September came at 0130 hours, guns opened up with Barrage Fire, as there were no means to ascertain the exact position or direction of intruding aircraft other than the hearing senses of the battery commanders. Both these night raids had been able to reach the air base undetected. All air raids came from south and south-east direction; that is from Kirana Hills direction. It was therefore concluded that enemy is using the Hill as an aid to his approach, two observers were therefore posted on both ends of the feature at night to give timely

²⁵ War Diary 20 LAA Regiment.

warning and they proved very effective.²⁶

On **11/12 September** there was no night attack however on 12/13 September the attack came, IAF had changed its tactics, instead of single attack, the night witnessed wave after wave of attacking intruders all in all four waves of IAF came, each having two-four aircraft with a time gap of fifteen minutes. Gunner Akhtar Badshah²⁷ of 133 LAA Battery was the firer on Gun No C-3 and in the second wave of the air attack, he was hit with a splinter of the fallen bomb and he received multiple splinters while still being in his firer seat. He was taken to the PAF hospital where he embraced martyrdom and was buried with military honour in the PAF graveyard. Brigadier Abdul Salam, Commander 3 AA Brigade who was on an operational tour was also present during the funeral.

On night **13/14 September** two waves of IAF attacked Sargodha without causing any significant damage. Same night Peshawar air field was attacked for the first time by IAF. At 0100 hours, 13 LAA command post established at the Peshawar air

²⁶ War Diary 20 LAA Regiment.

²⁷ He was decorated with Tamgha –e-Jurat. War Diaries of 20 LAA and 36 LAA regiments.

field received early warning from Ground Control Interceptor regarding impending air attack (six in numbers) flying from south east. At 0130 hours, enemy aircraft threw flares in order to lit the air field, guns opened fire and no damage was caused, enemy dropped its fuel tank as well which fell close to own gun position.²⁸ Night raids on Sargodha were now sporadic in nature, enemy bombers came on the night of 15/16 September, 16/17 September and last raid came on the night of 20/21 September 1965, 'no damage was done either to the PAF installations or the LAA defences'.²⁹

Peshawar Air Field was subject of another air attack at 0250 hours on **16 September**; early warning was given by PAF at 0230 hours thus guns were well prepared and anxiously waited for the aircraft. Enemy dropped Green flares on the air field, only a portion of old ATC building and officers block was damaged, bombs had fallen on the north circular road and it was the shock waves which caused damage.³⁰ In another incident, own F-104 had sustained damage and crashed during landing, Naib Subedar Muhammad Aslam and

²⁸ War Diary 13 LAA Regiment

²⁹ War Diary 20 LAA Regiment.

³⁰ War Diary 13 LAA Regiment

Gunner Khan Afsar who were manning the 40 mm Bofor, rushed towards the burning Starfighter and with utter disregard to their own safety they helped the unconscious pilot and brought him to the safe distance. Both gunners were decorated with Tamgha-e-Basalat.³¹

Last Days of Air War - Sargodha

By evening **20 September** 1965 it became obvious that IAF had lost the will to attack own air bases any more, thus 14 LAA Battery (ex 13 LAA) was pulled out from Sargodha on 21 September evening. A new anti-aircraft battery Sargodha Light Anti-Aircraft Battery (Mujahids) was raised on 21 September 1965. Major Anwar Noon was its first battery commander and it had thirty 20 mm cannons. Major (retired) Sakhi Muhammad a reservist was entrusted with training and on 28 September 1965, this LAA Battery fired its first rounds during training.

Light Anti-Aircraft - Field Formations

Pakistan's military had anticipated the Indian riposte with the ever advancing success of Grand Slam in the Indian Occupied Kashmir. Army and air force were on

³¹ War Diary 13 LAA Regiment.

high alert since the rolling of the Operation Grand Slam; the only intangible was when India will lose its nerves. The operational strategy revolved around a knockout blow through own 1 Armoured Division 'Mailed Fist'. It was kept in rear at Chiniot in August 1965, at the onset of Operation Gibraltar and later moved across east of River Ravi before September. 19 (SP) LAA regiment was an integral part of Mailed Fist and provided ack ack cover. Indian opening move was to make dash for the Lahore with infantry and armoured, yet it did not committed its sole armoured division in this manoeuvre.

Lahore-Kasur-Khem Karan. 6-12 September

The 1965 War had three phases, in the first phase India launched attack at early morning of 6 September with an aim to capture Lahore, it was blunted by own 10 and 11 Infantry Divisions. Pakistan Army had the grand strategy of attacking the India with its 1 Armoured Division making a bold thrust towards Amritsar. Thus in this war the role of armoured formation was lynchpin and extreme caution was exercised and displayed through camouflage and frequent movement thereby keeping the Indians in suspense and horror. On the eve of the Indian attack, Mailed Fist was deployed in Halla-Balloki-Bhai Pheru area. 19 (SP) LAA's Batteries were deployed at ammunition depot Halla, divisional administrative area (DAA) at Bhai Pheru and one battery

was protecting the Balloki Headworks.

On the evening of 6 September, Mailed Fist move forward to its forming up place , resultantly one LAA Battery of 19 (SP) LAA also moved by road to protect the bridgehead over Rohi Nullah between Kasur and Khem Karan,³² another battery also move by road to protect bridge over BRB Canal. On the night of 6/7 September 1965, armoured division (DAA) move to new location supported by two (SP)LAA Batteries. *‘Kasur diversion, BRB bridge and Rohi Nullah bridge obstacles were creating traffic jams and the enemy air was very active.’*³³ There were over 400 civilian trucks parked haphazardly in the DAA, these trucks had arrived on the evening of 6 September. On the very next night 7/8 September, a complete traffic chaos erupted due to these vehicles at Bhai Pheru and it took five hours to clear the jam; however LAA was not put to test by the enemy. On the same very night as soon as the LAA (SP) Batteries reached their destination they received orders to move forward and reinforced the LAA defences at the forward edge ahead of Kasur. These two batteries without any pause set forward, their A vehicles left by train via Manga Mandi-Raiwind-Kasur, the B Vehicles convoy of these two SP LAA batteries move by road, it was subject

³² War Diary 19 (SP) LAA Regiment.

³³ War Diary 19 (SP) LAA.

to air raid near Kasur'.³⁴ As the special military train halted at Athilpur a small railway station next to Kasur, the IAF attacked and strafed the train, own LAA(SP) guns retaliated fire while in the process of derailing, few guns had been off loaded from the train while majority of guns were still on rails. After the air-raid both batteries rushed, one occupied the bridge on Rohi Nullah meant for B Vehicles and other battery deployed around Kasur diversion. 'The AA defence was now thick and effective and the enemy aircraft, received heavy punishment.'³⁵

On the night of 8/9 September 1965, own armoured division was unleashed and enemy soon realised the gravity of this manoeuvre and threw everything in the arena including inundation of the area. IAF was carrying out an average of fifteen sorties daily yet failed to reach any worthwhile objective. In the process impetus of own armoured division was now lost and battle became an act of attrition. Pakistan Army had managed to ingress ten miles inside Indian Territory and captured Khem Karan Railway Station. By night 10/11 September, IAF sorties dropped down to an average of 3-4 per day. Own LAA (SP) Battery deployed at Kasur Diversion was moving

³⁴ War Diary 19 (SP) LAA.

³⁵ War Diary 19 (SP) LAA

forward to supplement the Anti-Aircraft defence to 21 Medium Artillery regiment deployed close to Khem Karan railway station.

The war entered into its third and decisive phase when India launched its armoured division in Ravi-Chenab corridor. Battle was already taking place in and around Sialkot since 6 September but now Chawinda town thirty odd miles east of Sialkot became the focus of the world; fate of a nation hinged on its defence.

Rachna Corridor

The major and decisive battle of 1965 War was fought in the green fields of Northern Punjab or Rachna Corridor; the area between the Rivers Ravi – Chenab. Both rivers originate from Himalayas north of Sialkot in high mountains of Kashmir and entered into Pakistan forming a narrow funnel which extends as river flows down. Thus the triangle formed by Wazirabad (Chenab) in west- Lahore (Ravi) on east and Sialkot in north with Gujranwala as the major city was the objective of Indian armoured division supported by no less than three infantry divisions. Indian aim was to advance southward with the flow of terrain, capture Gujranwala and cut off the main artery of Pakistan; the Grand Trunk Road and railway line running parallel to it.

Own 1 Corps was deployed in the area along with Artillery 4 Corps. LAA defences revolved around 29 LAA and 36 LAA Regiments. Whereas 36 LAA was deployed for the protection of bridges and ordnance depots, 29 LAA was in the field moving with the artillery regiments. Between 6-12 September 1965, one battery of 36 LAA (133 LAA Battery) was moved from Kala to Sargodha air base on 6 September and on 12 September another battery (135 LAA) was shifted from bridge on River Jhelum to Khem Karan. 134 LAA Battery (ex 36 LAA) which was deployed for air defence protection of bridge on River Chenab was taken out on 13 September and deployed at Ravi Syphon. Only 132 LAA Battery (36 LAA regiment) remained deployed throughout the war for anti-aircraft protection of bridge on River Ravi; two troops from this battery were pulled out on 19 September to protect the Syphon at Burki. The strategic bridges on the rivers (Jhelum, Chenab and Ravi) were seldom attacked by the IAF; it was only on 20 September 1965 when two Hunters attacked Ravi Bridge. 'Aircraft flew at low level and one aircraft was shot down, forcing the other to run away'.

On 6 September 1965 when India crossed the international border the Anti-Aircraft regiments of Pakistan Army were already deployed, however there was no anti-aircraft defence available to the two own infantry divisions which took the initial brunt of enemy

assault in early morning. Surprisingly Indian Air Force did not provide any close support to their infantry and armour. The very first raid of enemy airforce came at early morning at Dhaunkal railway station near Wazirabad railway junction. Miss Toosi who was a college student received fatal splinters due to Indian aircraft strafing on a parked train and became the first civilian casualty of the war due to enemy air strafing.³⁶

Own 29 LAA Regiment till the early hours of the 6 September 1965 was deployed in support of 7 Infantry Division at Khaur across Munawar Tawi, along with 110 LAA Battery. At midday, 29 LAA tactical headquarters and 111 LAA Battery which was providing LAA cover to the own artillery regiments was ordered to move to Sialkot and be undercommand 4 Corps Artillery; by evening 29 LAA was in position. The day was thrilling for the ack ack gunners as IAF attacked the very gun position which were being defended at Khaur. *‘4-6 enemy aircraft attacked own gun position defended by 110 LAA Battery, four times during the day and were engaged, one enemy aircraft was shot down.’*³⁷

³⁶ Pakistan Railway History plaque at Wazirabad railway junction, a mosque has been built in the memory of martyrs . Two railway labourers were also killed in that air raid.

³⁷ War Diary 29 LAA Regiment.

19 (SP) LAA less one battery,³⁸ was also moved from Kasur to Gujranwala on 12/13th September, its B Vehicles(administrative) moved by road and A Vehicles (tracked) were transported by train. On arrival at Ghakkar (town near Gujranwala) the regiment provided Anti-Aircraft defence to the armoured division administrative area (DAA).

13-22 September 1965

The final act of 1965 War was fought in the plains of Chawinda, India unleashed its armoured division in a bid to capture Sialkot and reach Grand Trunk Road. Own armoured division moved from Gujranwala to Nandipur with 19 (SP) LAA providing protection. On the same night (13/14) the 19(SP) LAA was ordered to move further up and reach Pasrur via Daska. *‘Traffic control and the spacing being good, the distance was covered in three hours’*. The road from Nandipur to Daska is single track with high trees on both sides. Despite the war, people thronged on the road and offered everything they had to the troops. After reaching Pasrur, the 19 (SP) LAA was deployed on the south and east of the town. *‘Only a few raids materialised which were driven off*

³⁸ 19 (SP) LAA War Diary, the battery was left at Khem Karan to support 5 Armoured Brigade.

conveniently, by this time it was known that enemy is going only for gun areas'. There was a serious consideration in firing the anti-aircraft guns as own aircraft were also in air. It is worth highlighting that the Indian move was detected accidentally by own Army Aviation aircraft on a reconnaissance mission by Captain Hidayat Ullah Niazi (later major general and SJ).³⁹ Own field artillery guns and regiments 1 (SP) Field Regiment, 31 Field Regiment and 8 Medium Regiment under command 4 Corps Artillery were deployed in between Pasrur and Chawinda whereas 15 (SP) and 16 (SP) Regiments were deployed west of Badiana.

On the morning of 15 September, 19 (SP) LAA was instructed to be prepared to support the 12 Cavalry in ground attack role, they were to protect the approaches to Pasrur. Battle was fluid, the batteries of 19 (SP) LAA were moved rapidly and at times dispersed, and one battery was tasked to protect the bridges on the canal whereas two batteries were protecting the field regiments (15 and 16 SPs). On 19 September, two enemy aircraft attacked the guns positions of heavy regiment, this attack lasted for over three minutes, during which one enemy

³⁹ Azam, Cheema, Madni *An Illustrated History of Pakistan army Aviation 1947-2007*. Islamabad, Army Press , 2007.

aircraft was shot down by 111 LAA Battery (29 LAA).⁴⁰

Enemy aircraft attacked own positions and were deterred by the anti-aircraft fire. In the absence of a clear fire control orders, the Ack Ack gunners had to be extra cautious in opening fire on the aircraft lest they hit own aircraft. As 19 (SP) LAA was dispersed thus, hostile acts of enemy aircraft gave ample warning time to open fire.

On 21 September at 1000 hours, a formation of Indian Mysteres appeared and attacked the gun positions of own field artillery; it was one of the heaviest air attack, two formations attacked. The duel between the Ack Ack and the pilots started, the AA guns kept on firing at the diving aircraft and similarly the enemy pilot also aimed at knocking off the guns. Tactically, own AA fire is always directed at the incoming aircraft rather than the receding aircraft.

Presence of two LAA Batteries on the battle field began to be felt by the enemy very soon, A Canberra and over half a dozen aircraft were hit between 16 -23 September, enemy began to give wide berth to AA defended areas...Regiment got away lightly considering the pounding, apart from air attacks, from the enemy field and medium artillery. Three men were killed and

⁴⁰ 29 LAA War Diary.

*four wounded, two tanks were damaged, one of them slightly.*⁴¹

111 LAA Battery and Chawinda

During the 1965 War, this LAA Battery commanded by Major Rao Tajjamul Hussain Khan, with Naib Subedar Akbar Khan as the troop leader. Battery remained deployed in Sialkot Sector. On the morning of 6 September, it moved from Bhimber to Sialkot and remained undercommand 4 Corps Artillery. It was given the task to provide anti-aircraft protection to 33 Heavy and 34 Heavy Regiments. On 8 September, while being deployed at Milestone 11 on Sialkot-Daska road, it shot down one enemy aircraft.⁴² On 9th September, the Battery moved to Badiana to protect the two heavy regiments. On 11 September at 0630 hours, Indian aircraft attacked 34 Heavy Regiment, own 111 LAA Battery opened fire and one aircraft was shot down. At 0900 hours, four Indian aircraft again attacked the same position, two aircraft were shot down⁴³ by this battery and one pilot was found dead near Chawinda.

On the morning of 12 September at 0630 hours, a

⁴¹ 19 (SP) LAA War Diary.

⁴² War Diary of 29 LAA PP 107-110.

⁴³ War Diary of 29 LAA PP 107-110.

formation of four IAF jets attacked 33 Heavy Regiment, three soldiers of 111 Battery were injured however the Battery shot down two Indian jets.⁴⁴ Next day (13 September) the gun positions were again attacked by Indian aircraft at 0630 hours, two aircraft were shot down⁴⁵ and one was damaged. Mystere No.1051 and Mystere No 1061, pilot of former was killed. On 14 September, enemy airforce was active whole day in the area of 111 LAA Battery, at 0700 hours, one aircraft was hit⁴⁶ which was seen falling in area Maduphur. On 16 September, the Battery moved to area between Pasrur and Daska. On 19, Battery again came under air attack and this was repeated on 20 and 21 September as well.

111 LAA Battery (29 LAA) was awarded with two Sitara-e-Jurats namely Major Rao Tajjamal and Naib Subedar Muhammad Khan Akbar, whereas two more were decorated with Tamgha-e-Jurats, namely Havildar Siraj Ul Islam and Havildar Akbar Din.

134 LAA Battery (36 LAA)

In the September 1965 War, another LAA Battery

⁴⁴ War Diary of 29 LAA PP 107-110.

⁴⁵ War Diary of 29 LAA PP 107-110.

⁴⁶ War Diary of 29 LAA PP 107-110.

which rose to distinction was 134 LAA Battery, commanded by Major Saidal Khan with Subedar Muhammad Din as the battery's senior junior commissioned officer (SJCO). 134 LAA Battery remained deployed at Chenab Bridge from 6 -13 September, however as there were no air raids on the bridge, the battery was moved to defend the syphon on River Ravi at Bambanwala Ravi Bedian (BRB). Two IAFs jets were shot down on 15 September, as the syphon came under heavy enemy air attack. On 19/20 September, four guns were detached from the battery undercommand Subedar Muhammad Din to protect a bailey bridge. It came under air attack and heavy shelling from enemy artillery guns; one Indian jet was shot down on 22 September 1965. Major Saidal Khan and Subedar Muhammad Din were both decorated with Sitara-e-Jurats

An interesting and morale boosting incident sums up the civilian morale during the war. At Nanowali a small village few miles west of Badiana where a battery of 19 (SP) LAA was deployed. 'Battle was at its height and the field regiments were blazing away day and night, air attacks were numerous and the LAA guns were giving maximum display of fire power, in all this raucous, an old lady was heard chastising a barber for having timidly

left the village a few days back'.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ War Diary of 36 LAA.